Hooghly river system from Allahabad to Haldia (1620 kms), (ii) The Brahmaputra from Sadiya to Dhubri (891 kms) and (iii) the West Coast Canal from Kollam to Kottapuram alongwith Champakara and Udyogmandal canals (205 kms) have been declared as National Waterways and are being developed for shipping and navigation by providing basic infrastructural facilities i.e. navigational channel, navigational aids, terminals.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) In this sector while the Government of India are committed to the creation of a facilitative environment in which greater movement of cargo and passengers can take place on National Waterways, State Governments are encouraged to assist in this task and to ensure greater popularity of this mode of transportation. A Centrally Sponsored Scheme in which larger amounts of Central assistance flow to the States has been put in place. An Inland Water Transport (IWT) Policy which envisages greater involvement of private sector has also been approved.

Utilisation of funds in the port sector

835. SHRIMATI N.P. DURGA: Will the Minister of SHIPPING be pleased to state:

(a) whether there has been a heavy shortfall in utilisation of the funds in the port sector during the last year;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the action proposed to ensure better implementation, control and monitoring of the projects to ensure that the funds do not lapse?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SHIPPING (SHRI DILIPKUMAR MANSUKHLAL GANDHI): (a) The Annual Plan Outlay for the port sector during 2002-03 was Rs. 1162.00 crores. Against this actual expenditure was Rs. 528.04 crores (provisional) which amounts to 45.44% utilization.

(b) Shortfall in expenditure is mainly attributable to the following:-

- Review and pruning of the outlays taking into account the decision to handover some projects to the private sector; reduction in outlays for ongoing as also new schemes based on more realistic estimates.

- Delay in finalization of tenders and award of contracts.
- Reduction in contracted cost as against estimated cost resulting in reduction in expenditure.
- Delay in sanction of projects due to procedural constraints.

(c) The Ministry of Shipping has impressed upon the Chairmen of Major Port Trusts and Heads of other organizations in the Port Sector on the need for critically reviewing the plan schemes and monitoring the pace of plan expenditure in order to ensure financial discipline and better expenditure management. Implementation of the schemes included in Annual Plan 2003-04 are being regularly reviewed and monitored closely with a view to ensuring optimum utilization of the funds.

Loans to handicapped persons

836. SHRI K. KALAVENKATA RAO:
SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY:

Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have assured the Vikalangula Cooperative Corporation of Andhra Pradesh that it would provide loans towards self-employment to the handicapped persons in the State;

(b) if so, the details thereof including its terms and conditions; and

(c) by when the scheme is likely to be operational and the funds released for the purpose?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRI NAGMANI): (a) and (b) The Andhra Pradesh Vikalangula Cooperative Corporation (APVCC) is one of the State Channelising Agencies of the National Handicapped Finance and Development Corporation (NHFDC), for channelising loans to persons with disabilities. The APVCC has executed a general loan agreement (salient features are giver in the enclosed Statement (*See* below) with NHFDC in this regard, and the State Government of Andhra Pradesh has provided a Block Government Guarantee of Rs. 10 crores.